

Exploring the Tactics of Creating a Child- Friendly Environment from the Perspectives of Teaching Professionals

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ABSTRACT

In March 2020, COVID-19 was declared a pandemic by World Health Organization. In India, a nationwide lockdown was announced across the nation from March 25, 2020, considering it as the safest way to break the chain of the infection. Regular classes in all educational institutes were suspended as a safety major. The online mode of teaching-learning was the only choice left. It was also realized that there is a necessity to provide online trainings to the teachers as well so that they would be trained to provide education on this mode with a ease. State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) and State Institute of Educational Management and Training (SIEMAT) organized different online programs to strengthen the teachers of Uttar Pradesh. State Institute of Educational Management and Training (SIEMAT, UP) in support of State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT, UP) organized a webinar in November, 2020. Teaching professionals of Uttar Pradesh attended this webinar. 756 participants asked the questions related to this topic in registration forms. Several participants wrote their questions in the chat boxes during the live session. Their questions were discussed by the educationists during the live session. The panel suggested different tactics with the teachers to create a child friendly environment in their schools. The responses of the participants were analyzed. The aim was to give them to make better understanding of child- friendly environment. This type of analysis and presentation will undoubtedly support the teachers in their profession in a better way.

KEYWORDS: child- friendly environment, webinar, SIEMAT, child centered, education

INTRODUCTION

A child- friendly environment refers to the experiences which motivate learners to construct their own understanding and accept responsibility to learn. It gives importance to the environment where students and teachers work together for a purpose of learning. It places children at the center of learning and encourages their active participation in learning. The article aims to define the child friendly environment, its importance and the ways to create it.

In traditional methods of teaching focus on the course content, teaching objectives and teaching strategies pre-decided by the teacher. Learners are not or less active. In child friendly teaching environment, teacher facilitates the process of learning for the learner. This method allows the learners to investigate, experiment and to assimilate knowledge for constructing their own understanding.

In this process they question if there is some query, formulate and test hypotheses, draw their own conclusions, compare their findings with those of their peers, verify and validate their own thoughts. Thinking on our own learning preferences is an excellent way to understand it. We should think about the following questions-

- How do we learn?
- When do we learn?
- What learning activities motivate us the most?
- When do we interact with other learners?
- What do we face difficulties in learning a new information or a new skill?

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Few questions like the above can help us to understand the necessity of the learner friendly environment.

State Institute of Educational Management and Training (SIEMAT), Uttar Pradesh is a state level institute in the area of Educational Planning, Management, Research and Training. SIEMAT organized a webinar in the month of November, 2020 and invited me as a reference person to discuss on the topic of child center education. Nearly, 35000 teaching professionals of Uttar Pradesh attended this webinar through zoom meeting or through YouTube. After getting the invitation from SIEMAT, I started reviewing the related literature on child centered education. My focus was to discuss the meaning, the objectives and the ways to create a child centered environment in the schools. That's why I surrounded my discuss with the teachers on three words- what, why and how. I encouraged teachers to share their ideas. Teachers shared their queries in the registration forms, to which we discuss during the sessions on the topics. SIEMAT also, shared a feedback from the teachers. Their feedback was taken on a google form. The teachers were expected to share their views on the related topic. Their views were later analyzed by the help of ICT expert Shri Antriksh Shukla.

Objective: To explore the tactics of creating a child- friendly environment from the perspectives of teaching professionals in Uttar Pradesh, India.

Literature Review: Child-centered design focuses on the quality of students' learning (Barr & Tagg, 1995). It is based on the understanding that each learner has different characteristics and these characteristics should be employed to elevate both teaching and learning. Jackson, Stratford, Krajcik, & Soloway(1995); Quintana et al., (2000) further explained that learner-centered design 'considers learning while doing'. Student-centered learning "engages students in their own success—and incorporates their interests and skills into the learning process." Student learning is personalized, competency-based, happens anytime and/or anywhere, and students have ownership in their learning.

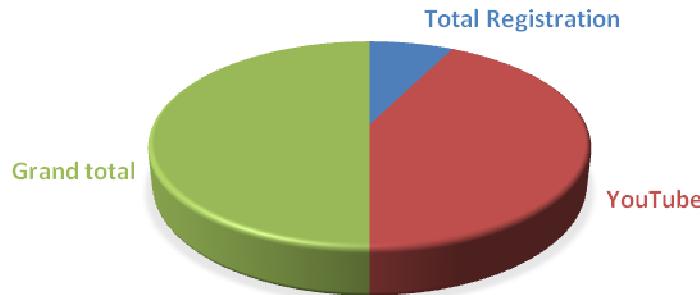
Constructivist like Driver and Easley believed that children construct knowledge by reconciliation of new information with their prior knowledge. Piaget's view of constructivism is based on the developmental stages of the learner. He believed that individuals construct knowledge individually based on the past experiences and through adaptive process. Vygotsky on the other hand believed that construction of knowledge occurs through interaction in the social world. On reviewing the related literature, we can find that following 5

Data Analysis and Findings

'C' formula may be helpful for creating a child centered environment:

- **Context:** Learning tasks should have a **real-world** application that allows learners to connect personally with what they are learning.
- **Connect:** Learners should be able to link their own experiences and previous knowledge with new learning.
- **Collaboration:** A problem-solving scenario allows learners to develop, test, and analyze their ideas while being exposed to others' opinions by supporting each other.
- **Conversation:** Communication with and within learners is essential for effective learning. Learners should spend time in conversation while planning and make sense of new learning.
- **Constructivism:** Each learner will arrive at an individual conclusion by his own efforts, developing his own understanding.

FIGURE 1: TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS



756 participants asked the questions related to this topic in registration form. Several participants wrote their questions in the chat box during the live session. Their questions were discussed and answered by the panelists in the question-answer session. The panel suggested the following points with the teachers to create a child friendly environment in their schools-

- **Develop a vision-** Students are more active in this setting; they're questioning, analyzing, discussing, qualifying, and drawing conclusions.
- **Know your learner-** All learners are different. A quick analysis will provide you the information to target students for additional support and to learn the strengths of individual student.(Multiple Intelligence)
- **Rethinking the learning outcomes-** Set priorities of the expected learning outcomes.
- **Shifting the balance of power-** Instead of waiting for content to be delivered students will be engaged in creating their own meaning and learning. It is necessary because it **shifts the focus, responsibility and expectations** to the individual **learner's strengths and weaknesses** to meet their needs.

Few ways are also extracted from the discussion with the teachers and from the ways suggested by them in the feedback. I feel immense pleasure to draft them here.

➤ **Welcome the child with a smile-** As students enter the school or the classroom, greet each one at the entrance. Try to make them an eye contact with you, give them a verbal or non-verbal greeting, depending on the age of the students or nature of the students. In this way, every student will realize a positive human contact at least once that day this will also reflect your care about them as individuals.

- **For providing a comfortable space-** Young student, like any other adult, have not only physical needs but also emotional needs like security, love, self-esteem, belongingness etc. These needs be considered by the teachers so that the students may be able to adjust in the classroom environment easily.
- **For giving an enjoyable place-** One of the goals of creating a student-centered environment should be to make learning joyful, challenging and engaging.
- **For making their senses active.**
- **For giving them concept based knowledge.**
- **Students know what they are learning and what is immediate benefit will they get-**Actually, young students don't have patient to wait for long term advantages of anything related. They must get some praise or reward just after the completion of that deed.

The teachers should always keep this point in their mind and try to behave accordingly.

- **Develop** trust and communication with the students.
- **Give value to mutual respect.**
- **For doing activities like group work etc.**
- **To make them feel special as every child wants to have.**
- **Students must have some opportunity to work at their own pace-** Students work according to their competencies or skills, and do so at their own pace.
- **Explore students' interests**-Exploring students' interests is core element to have a student-centered environment. Sometimes they know their interests that they may have and sometimes they don't even realize they have. Students are often working on a similar set of goals, but if we think deeply, not all on the same activity or task in the similar way. They all behave in the broader sense but ensure their individuality differently.
- **High degree of students' engagement, challenge, enthusiasm, joy-** The smiles and engagement should pass through every classroom and place of the school.
- **A blend of individual and group work(small or large)-** Students work in learning environment created by interacting between groups or one-on-one interaction with their teachers.
- **Multiple forms of assessment, feedback and demonstrations of learning-** Learners in learner-centered learning environments must get regular feedback. They must get individual feedback, hopefully on both academic performance, social and emotional behavior, so that they may be able to refine their personalities.
- Replace homework with engaging project-based **learning** activities.
- **Celebrate their success.** A celebration is an obvious event meant to recognize an achievement. When an achievement of some student is celebrated by his or her teacher and the fellows, he gets inspiration to carry on the efforts.

Conclusion:

The objective was to give the teachers a platform where they can discuss and make their understanding clearer on few topics which can support them in profession well-being. This approach will meet the needs of each individual learner. The teachers will be able to develop the things from the learner's perspective, encouraging them to take parts in planning activities and events, sharing responsibilities within the class

and enabling them to perform in a better way in the society in future as well. This sharing of ideas from different people, having different experiences gave a new horizon to the topic. This type of analysis and summing up will certainly help the teachers in performing their duties in the best way.

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